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TRUE SABBATH

EMBRACED AND OBSERVED.

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INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

Having often been solicited to give an account of my conversion from the observance of what is commonly called the Lord's Day, or Sunday, to the observance of the ancient Sabbath of Jehovah, the seventh day of the week, I submit this brief narrative to public notice, not so much for the justification of my present practice, as in the hope that it may be the means of leading many other Christian people candidly to examine this subject, which, as it appears to me, is very essential to the restoration of primitive Christianity. The narrative derives its importance, not from the person of the narrator, but from the practical exhibition which it furnishes of the working of divine truth upon the mind.

THE TRUE SABBATH EMBRACED AND OBSERVED.

EARLY PREPOSSESSIONS.

My parents, and nearly all of my family connections, being members of Baptist churches, or attached to that denomination—and I having been a member of the same for above twenty-five years, and more than half that time an accredited minister among them—all my preferences and prepossessions were with their peculiarities as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there was one characteristic doctrine of the Baptists which I esteemed above another, it was this: "We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by the inspiration of God, and are a perfect rule of faith and practice." I could say with the Psalmist, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

MATURED ATTACHMENTS.

I believed firmly, that if there was a Christian people upon the earth who had kept the primitive faith from the days of the apostles, and had never symbolized with the errors of the church of Rome in her idolatrous and adulterous course, that people was the Baptist denomination. If there was any thing in my religious privileges in which I gloried, it was in thinking that I had never been deceived by the working of that mystery of iniquity. I was sensible that the Baptists had errors among them; but I regarded them as the errors of fallible human nature, and not as departures from the constitutional doctrine and law of the Holy Scriptures—

some of them superinduced by an unwatchful and familiar intercourse with our more erroneous Pedobaptist brethren, and hence mediately, though not directly, the effect of that great apostacy which was predicted as to come and deceive all nations. Holding these sentiments, I was ardently and conscientiously attached to that denomination, as the most scriptural people on earth. I did not doubt but that I should remain united with them in time, in death, and in eternal life.

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REGARD FOR SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY.

Notwithstanding my prepossessions and attachments, it has been my prevailing desire, from the time of my conversion, to be a Scriptural Christian; and since I became a teacher of others, I have felt a growing sense of obligation to know and teach the whole counsel of God aright. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, saying, "Call no man master," "Call no man father," have for years been so deeply impressed upon my heart, that I have scrupulously refused to call myself a Fullerite, a Calvinist, an Armenian, or after any human name. Although I have my preferences in reading and approving the sentiments of great and good men, the Bible alone is my creed book.

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FORMER SABBATH SENTIMENTS.

My former Sabbath sentiments were formed according to the Puritan model. While a child, I learned Sutcliff's and Watts' Catechisms, in both of which it is taught, that the ten commandments are a rule of life to good men; and traditionally I was taught, that the Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week in honor

of the resurrection of Christ; and I fully believed this was confirmed by the various references to the first day contained in the New Testament.

DISTURBED ABOUT THE SABBATH.

I was first disturbed about the Sabbath seven years ago, when a brother sent me a tract upon the subject, called the *Investigator*. I read it with considerable interest, and was much perplexed in attempting to satisfy myself with my own views, as I went along in the perusal of it. I wished then, that there had been something more explicit upon the subject of the change of the day than what I could find in the New Testament. Not questioning, however, but that it was divinely changed, I quieted, rather than satisfied, my mind with what I supposed to be abundant apostolic example; and I remarked, that if our Pedobaptist brethren could produce from the Scriptures as clear examples of infant baptism, as we could of keeping the first day of the week for a Sabbath, I would admit its validity. Although I would not dare to say so now, then it sufficed to quiet my mind.

I had no farther solicitude upon the subject, until about midsummer of 1843. At that time, as several professors of religion of my acquaintance did not regard the day as I thought the Lord's Day ought to be regarded, I concluded to preach a sermon upon the subject, and commenced preparing one. I had then recently purchased Neander's History of the Christian Religion and Church during the First Three Centuries. I read this book with much satisfaction, as the work of an able and candid historian, who takes a philosophical view of the events and circumstances of society which operated to give character to those early ages of

church history. In the section on Christian Worship and Festivals, I was surprised to find the following statement, viz: "OPPOSITION TO JUDAISM *introduced the particular festival of Sunday* very early indeed into the place of the Sabbath..... The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance; and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a divine command in this respect—far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday. Perhaps at the end of the second century a false application of this kind had begun to take place; for men appear by that time to have considered laboring on Sunday as a sin." I was the more surprised at this statement, as I found Neander was not a Sabbath-keeper. He takes the high-church ground, acknowledging the right of the so-called apostolic or catholic church to alter or ordain the rites of Christian worship; which is, indeed, the foundation principle of all Papal, Puseyite, and Pedobaptist observances. I saw clearly enough, that if Neander was right, I had no better foundation for Sunday-keeping than hierarchists have for their Easter, Ascension, and Christmas Festivals, which I had always repudiated; or than Pedobaptists have for sprinkling infants. I therefore determined to give the subject

A THOROUGH EXAMINATION.

I commenced with human authors, and read Fuller, Buck, Doddridge, Paley, Wilson, Humphrey, Nevins, Kingsbury, Phelps, Whateley, and others; and I was astonished to find every one of them admitting, that there is no express command, precept, or passage of Scripture, to authorize the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first

day of the week. They all attempt to support the practice by inferences and analogical reasonings from particular events. Not having veneration large enough to bow to their great names and acute reasonings, I was landed upon a lonely shore, without pilot or compass, with no guide but the truthful chart of Revelation. As I had often vowed in my heart to the Lord, that I would be a Bible Christian so far as I could discover the meaning of the divine Word, or know the revealed will of God; and had more than once told my Pedobaptist friends, when accused of sectarianism, that I would leave all for the truth's sake, if I could discover that I was wrong; I was greatly perplexed, for *I found a great fact*—The Sabbath was changed. The greater part of the world, the most estimable of Christians, do keep their weekly Sabbath on the first day! Can they all be wrong? I conversed with some, and found them more inconsistent in their reasons than the authors I read. For a time, to sanction the change of the Sabbath, I took what may properly be called prelatical ground. It may be stated as follows, viz: "The thing exists; and in the New Testament we find some things which appear to us so like it, that we conclude this and they are identical; though we cannot find the particulars of the change. And besides, we find some occurrences mentioned in the New Testament which seemingly happened in accordance with it and which afford reasons for it, and so we think they should be considered satisfactory evidences of the change existing at the time." But my confidence in this fact was overturned by discovering *another great fact*, viz: That the first day was not honored as a Sabbath during the first two centuries of the Christian era; and that when it did come to be so observed, it was not

on the considerations that are now alledged, but on what appeared to me a wicked reason—mere spite to the Jews. I therefore commenced anew,

A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

But the more attentively I read it, with this object in view, viz. to find out the mind of Christ upon the subject of the Sabbath, the more plainly I saw that it was against me. I found that Christ and his apostles enjoined the observance of the law of the ten commandments as holy, just, and good —that law which says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,.....the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." I found, also, that Christ had said, (Mark 2: 27, 28,) "The Sabbath was made for man; therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath day"—plainly incorporating it into the laws of his kingdom. Luke also says, many years after the resurrection, writing the account in his Gospel of that event, "The women rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment"—thus recognizing it, as it appeared to me, to be a commandment still in force.

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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

The Resurrection of Christ being regarded as the great event which required the change in question, I carefully considered that matter. But I no where found it spoken of by the New Testament writers, as it is by divines of modern times. The only instance I could find of its celebration by the apostles, was in the ordinance of baptism, in these words, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6: 5.) And again, "What shall they do which are baptized for the

[resurrection of the] dead, if the dead rise not at all?" (1 Cor. 15: 29.) I concluded that there could not be two apostolic ways of celebrating it; and hence that I must look for some other reason to justify the change in question.

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THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

I had always supposed that our Saviour rose on the morning of the first day of the week, and had no doubt about finding it plainly recorded that he did. But when I searched for it in the evangelists, I found the accounts very different from what I had supposed. Matthew 28: 1, reads, "In the end of the Sabbath." Mark 16: 1—"When the Sabbath was passed." Matthew—"As it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." Mark—"Very early in the morning, the first day of the week." Luke 24: 1—"Very early in the morning." John 20: 1—"Early, when it was yet dark, ... they came to the sepulchre, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." As this did not tell the exact time of his resurrection, I set myself to see if I could find it by any other passages. On examination, it appeared plain to me, that as he was buried at sun-down, according to that law in Deut. 21: 23, to fulfill his own prediction, "So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," his resurrection must have taken place at the same hour of the day, or rather evening—which would destroy its identity with the first day as now reckoned, and carry back his crucifixion to the fourth day of the week.

All we know of the time of the crucifixion, I found to be, that it was on the fourteenth day of the first month, the preparation day of the Passover

The fifteenth day was the Passover Sabbath, a high day with the Jews. (See John 19: 14, 31.)

If Jesus was thus crucified on the fourth day of the week, I found that it made a striking correspondence between the event and the prediction in Daniel 9: 7.

The reason why the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of PENTECOST, I found to be, because it was the first annual national assembly after the crucifixion—the Saviour being put to death at the Passover, and Pentecost being fifty days after. This event, therefore, had nothing to do with the Sabbath.

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CHRIST'S APPEARANCES.

The appearances of Christ to his disciples on the first day of the week, are considered as good reasons for sanctifying that day. It is supposed that he so designed them. But these did not appear to me as I expected, when I came to examine them carefully. I knew them as related by the evangelists, but I had them traditionally arranged and associated to suit the arguments for keeping the first day; and when I came to read them with an honest inquiry after the truth, they appeared very different from what I had supposed. I found that there were five appearances of Christ to his disciples on the first day following his resurrection; and neither of them occurred when the disciples were assembled for worship; neither were they accompanied by any such direction.

His first appearance was to the four women, as they returned from the sepulchre, where they had been with spices to embalm the body of Jesus. They were directed by an angel, and by Jesus himself, to go and tell his disciples that Christ was

risen, and would meet them on a mountain in Galilee as he had promised them before his crucifixion. There was nothing in this like Sabbath-keeping!

The women having gone into the city, informed Peter and John, who went immediately to the sepulchre; and having looked in and satisfied themselves that the report of the women was true, Peter and John returned to the city. But Mary tarried still at the sepulchre, weeping, when Jesus appeared to her alone. (John 20: 16.)

Next he appeared to Peter. (Luke 24: 34, 1 Cor. 15: 5.)

Afterward he appeared to Cleopas and another disciple as they journied to Emmaus. (Luke 24: 13—35.)

At night, when they had retired for their evening repast, Jesus appeared in the midst of them, and partook with them of a piece of broiled fish and an honey comb. (Luke 24: 42.)

These were all on the first day of the week, and they appeared to me conclusive evidence, that the disciples had not yet received any intimations of a change of Sabbath time, there being no evidence of it in their conduct or discourse.

Eight days after this, Jesus appeared again to his disciples, Thomas being with them. (John 20: 26.) After these things, he shewed himself again to seven of his disciples as they were fishing at the sea of Tiberius. (John 21: 1—14.)

At another time, probably on the mountain in Galilee, he was seen of five hundred brethren at once. (1 Cor. 15: 6.)

After this, he was seen of James. (1 Cor. 15: 7.)

Then of the disciples when he was taken up into heaven. (Luke 24: 50, 51.)

Last of all, he was seen by Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. (1 Cor. 15: 8.)

There are eleven instances mentioned of his meeting his disciples, and not one of them contains a single reference to the Sabbath in any way whatever, which fully convinced me that the pretence of the Sabbath being changed at the resurrection of Christ was wholly groundless. How any one, without very strong prepossessions and blindness, could think these things make a Sabbath, I could not see. Only five of these instances are said to be on the first day, and these were all private interviews! Saul of Tarsus might as well conclude that he ought to build a meeting-house where Jesus met him, as for the disciples to make a Sabbath of the first day because Jesus appeared to them on that day. After examining these things, it looked to me as though the Papists were quite as justifiable for changing the second commandment to make an image of Christ and his cross, as Protestants are for altering the fourth commandment to honor the resurrection. The Papists honor the crucifixion, and the Protestants the resurrection.

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APOSTOLIC EXAMPLES.

I looked for apostolic examples. But alas, they all failed me. They did not afford me the evidences I had supposed they would. I found but one account of a Christian assembly on the first day of the week, which was at Troas; and that was an evening meeting, and a parting meeting which Paul held with his friends; and while he was holding that meeting, seven of his companions in travel went and removed the ship in which they were to sail from Troas to Assos, whither he followed them on foot to go aboard. I thought, Could they be keeping Sabbath in so doing? (See Acts 20: 1—14.)

"*The Lord's Day,*" I found mentioned but once in the New Testament, (Rev. 1: 10,) and there it does not tell what day of the week it was on, so that I judged it certainly must favor that day for which there is both Bible command and example, rather than that day for which there is nothing but custom and tradition. Thus it appeared to me, that all apostolic example was not only against the observance of the first day, but clearly in favor of the seventh; for I found that at Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle observed the Sabbath with both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 13: 14, 42, 44.) The same at Philippi. (Acts 16: 13.) And at Thessalonica. (Acts 17: 2, 3.) Also at Corinth, where the Apostle continued a year and six months, he observed EVERY Sabbath day. (Acts 18: 4, 11.)

The law of God, with all its awful sanctions, flaming from Mount Sinai, appeared to me to threaten my destruction if I dared to reject any part of its holy claims, for when I read what Jesus said, (Luke 16: 17,) "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail," I could not entertain a doubt but that it was obligatory upon his disciples.

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THE DECISION.

These things greatly distressed me, and in the end separated me from Sunday-keeping forever. At this time I was not acquainted with a single seventh-day Christian. But a bookseller sent me some copies of the "Address of the Seventh-day Baptists to the Baptists of the United States," which was peculiarly opportune to my state of mind. It showed me the inconsistency of Sunday-keeping with all the foundation principles of the

faith I had received, and the order I had observed; and served to bring me to a decision. Yet I did not dare to submit my mind at once to the force of truth, until I had repeatedly investigated every Scripture passage and event on which I had formerly relied for a justification of my faith. I endeavored to do this as independently of extrinsic considerations as I could; and each time brought me to the same conclusion. I could find no Scripture authority for a first-day Sabbath. Yet the conflict was not over. I suffered for some time that deep mental anguish which attends a conscientious mind, where enlightened judgment conflicts with all the inclinations, expectations, and kindliest associations of life. If ever an anxious mariner sailed tremblingly between Sylla and Charybdis, surely his condition was like mine at this time. To advocate the Sunday observance without Bible authority, I could not for conscience's sake. To embrace the no-Sabbath doctrine, I dared not; this was too dark and downward a leap from the highway of holiness for me to hazard; and the former was too disloyal and dishonest a course for me to pursue in the name of the King of saints. For a time I indulged a forlorn hope, that I might find some way of reconciling the matter so as to appear consistent without leaving the denomination. But accustomed to speak the honest sentiments of my heart, I found the subject naturally influencing my prayers and my preaching, and in other ways embarrassing me, so that it became a burden I knew not how to bear. I commenced keeping the Sabbath alone in my study. It seemed now as if God had shut me up to my own vows; *I was compelled to renounce all* for his truth, or prove apostate to the principles of godliness! Dark indeed appeared my prospects. I had a wife and eight children to support, and no

human resource to look to but my salary. I felt, too, for the reputation, sentiments, and prepossessions of my wife and children, some of whom had already made a profession of religion, and for many other young converts recently gathered into the church of which I was pastor. But just at that time, I was called to baptize a young woman who had to leave father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and all she had on earth, for her faith in Christ. This greatly assisted me to determine to do so too.

The decision gave great relief to my mind. I could now with more confidence appeal to our Father in heaven for support and direction. I could with great comfort appropriate many precious promises of God's Word to my own case, and find them a precious cordial to my soul. Never have I found more enjoyment in divine things than since I thus renounced all for Christ. I found as the Psalmist expresses it, that "great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

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CONCLUSION.

The result has been happy in my own family. All in my house who have come to years of discretion have since united in walking according to the commandments. Although it was not easy at first to throw off early prepossessions, we have found no embarrassments from them since the decision was made. Many things which we feared have proved imaginary, and all necessary good has been added unto us; and the truth of God has more abounded toward us. Thus will it be with all them that obey God. "All his commandments

are sure." "No good thing will he withhold from him that walketh uprightly." Its influence upon my religious feelings, and views of divine truth in general, has been to clear up some things that were previously obscure, and give a beautiful harmony to the requirements of the law and the doctrines of the Gospel. My hope is, when Babylon shall fall, to be found among them who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Rev. 14. 12.)

TAKING UP THE CROSS.

BY JOSEPH STENNETT.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.

Let the world neglect and leave me;
They have left my Saviour too;
Human hopes have oft deceived me;
Thou art faithful, thou art true.

Perish, earthly fame and treasure;
Come disaster, scorn, and pain;
In thy service, pain is pleasure;
With thy favor, death is gain.

Oh! 'tis not in grief to harm me,
While thy bleeding love I see;
Oh! 'tis not in joy to charm me,
When that love is hid from me.

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